

SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable the

LORD-MAYOR,

THE

Court of ALDERMEN,

THE

SHERIFFS,

AND THE

GOVERNORS of the several
Hospitals of the City of London,

AT THE

Parish Church of St. BRIDGET,

ON

MONDAY in *Easter-Week*, 1739.

Herring

By THOMAS Lord Bishop of BANGOR.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. and J. PEMBERTON, at the *Golden-Buck* against
St. Dunstan's Church in *Fleet-street*. M.DCC.XXXIX.

Perry, Mayor.

*Tuesday, the 1st Day of May, 1739.
and in the Twelfth Year of the
Reign of King George the Second,
of Great-Britain, &c.*

IT is Ordered, That the Thanks of
this Court be given to the Right
Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop
of *Bangor*, for his Sermon preached before
this Court, and the Governors of the
several Hospitals of this City, at the
Parish-Church of *St. Bridget*, on *Monday*
in *Easter-Week* last, and that he be
desired to print the same.

M A N.





MATTHEW XV. 7.

Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.



THE Vertue of Mercy, to the Practice of which we are exhorted in the Text, is one of the great Duties of Natural Religion; I call it a great Duty, because whether we judge of its Importance from its Suitableness to the Nature of the Deity, and his Rules of acting in the Creation, or from its Friendliness to Human Society, or its Usefulness to every Individual, we shall find it equal to, if not exceeding in its Influence and Perfection every other Vertue. Our Saviour therefore, upon this great and solemn Occasion, when he is delivering the Substance of his Doctrine for the Instruction and Observance of the World, takes care to distinguish this Vertue, to give it a principal Place in his

System of Religion, and to recommend it to the Practice of Men, as the best and happiest Thing they can do for themselves or others. — *Blessed are, &c.*

Let it be our present Business, if you please, to consider this Precept a little more particularly; for since Mercy is a Duty of such clear and acknowledg'd Importance, we shall certainly find our Account in a distinct Examination of it, in explaining it as clearly and particularly, and recommending it as forcibly and affectionately as we can. And first, for explaining Mercy, I think there is little or no Difficulty in the general Notion of it, That seems, in a great Measure, secur'd by the Clearness of our common Apprehensions; for the main Lines of our natural Duty are so large and legible, whether from their apparent Reasonableness and Conveniency, or from being writ by the Finger of *God*, and woven into our Frame and Constitution, that it is hardly possible for any Man to be ignorant of them. — Certain it is, That if we do err in our Notions about them, the Fault is more in our Wills than our Understanding. I might therefore excuse myself from giving a Definition of this Vertue, and send every Man to his own Breast for Information about it. — Or, if I must attempt it, for Method's sake, the clearest Account that I can give of it in Words, is, That it is that Kindness and Benignity of Disposition, by which we are carried to pity

pity the Wants, or Weaknesses, or Miseries of others, and by consequence, if left to ourselves and our natural Inclinations, to supply and relieve them. This Account of Mercy, will, I think, include all the Objects about which it can be exercis'd, when we consider it as a social Vertue, regularly and mutually exerted, in pitying the Infirmities and relieving the Distresses of one another, in comforting the Afflicted, in instructing the Ignorant, in reclaiming the Wicked, in forgiving Injuries, in departing from our strict Right, and moderating the Severity of Justice; in doing more for the Good of others than we are strictly oblig'd to do, and in shewing a general Sweetness and Humanity of Temper. — This, I think, is Mercy in its full Extent and Influence; and it may be of very good practical Use to us, to run over these several Particulars in our Minds a little more distinctly. And first, It is the Property of Mercy to pity the Infirmities of other Men; to put on, as the Scriptures express it, Bowels of Mercy, to cultivate a Tenderness and Humanity of Temper, a quick and ready Feeling of each others Wants and Pains; by which I would not be understood to mean, a soft and unmanly Weakness, Passion without the Power and Constancy of Reason, but a generous Sympathy and Affection, steadily and wisely pitying and considering the unhappy Circumstances of other Men.

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And this is what indeed we are naturally carried to without the Disciplining of Reason, or the Precepts of Religion. — There is something in the Human Constitution that naturally melts at Human Misfortunes; and it is well for the World that it is so; for we see, in effect, notwithstanding this natural Bias, notwithstanding the Reasonableness and Conveniency of this vertuous Disposition, notwithstanding its plain Connection with our own Interest, who are so often the Objects of others Pity and Compassion, and the strict Injunction and most engaging Example of our great Master and Saviour *Christ Jesus*, we frequently make a shift to work ourselves up to such an Hardness and Insensibility at each other's Calamities, that we seem to have changed our natural Tempers, and to have become more inhuman than Savages, and obdurate as the Rocks, Not considering, that such behaviour as this is an huge Reproach to us; for let our Condition in Life be never so high and prosperous, (a Condition most expos'd usually to Pride and Inhumanity) Compassion to those below us will neither lessen its Dignity nor abate its Happiness: It will indeed encrease the one and aggrandize the other; for nothing is more noble and generous, more reasonable in itself, more easy and satisfactory, more becoming a Man, and, our Saviour assures here, more agreeable to the Spirit of his Religion, than to be

Merciful

Merciful. — Merciful in our Disposition, and Merciful in our actual Charity.

For it is to be consider'd that Relief of Men's Misfortunes, is the natural Consequence of Pity and Compassion: Pity must precede our Mercy; but our Mercy is very *incomplete* if it does not produce our Charity; where actual Charity is impossible, there the Disposition alone will be estimated and rewarded for Mercy, but nothing can excuse our with-holding our Assistance, where it is in our Power to afford it. — And what, I would ask, are those Circumstances wherein it is not: It is hardly possible, but among Men of the same Community, where there is an hearty Compassion for one another's Calamities, there is, in every Man, a Way to relieve them, by present Help, by Advice, by Interest, by Money or Solicitation, or, if all these fail, by our kind and charitable Prayers, and recommending a suffering Fellow-Creature to the merciful Providence of God Almighty. — By one or other of these Ways, it is in every Man's Power to shew his Mercy; and therefore not to assist another in his Sufferings, is not only short of the merciful Disposition of a Christian, but an Argument moreover of great Savageness and Inhumanity.

I mention'd it, as another Property of Mercy to comfort the Afflicted; by which I wou'd be understood principally to mean relieving one another

ther in all the Distresses of our Minds. It is there that we are liable to the greatest and most touching Evils; for it is on all Hands agreed, and is indeed demonstrable, that the Pains of the Body are no way comparable to the Distresses of the Mind.—Its Agonies are inexpressible, and whether they arise from Guilt, from Fear, from Weakness, or from outward Circumstances, it is not only an Instance of the kindest Friendship and tenderest Humanity, but of the purest and most excellent Goodness, to soothe and alleviate them, to advise the Guilty, to fortify the Fearful, to raise and revive the Weak, and to administer the Succours of Reason and Religion to the Broken and Desponding. And this reminds me of another Instance of Mercy to our Fellow-Creatures and Fellow-Christians, which is, instructing the Ignorant, giving them just Notions of the Deity, of his providential Care of and Love to Men in the Religion of *Christ Jesus*, and of their Obligations to Human Society and to Themselves; for certainly the more we know of *God*, and the better we understand ourselves and our Duty, the better and the happier Men we shall be for it. The doing this has always been deem'd a Point of great Wisdom, and Goodness, and Mercy in the Christian Character: It is, in a manner, peculiar to it, and the Reason of its being so, is very evident; for, if there be Truth in the grand Doctrine of Christianity, a Resurrection and a Future Life, as the
Reward

Reward or Punishment of the Present, nothing is of so much Consequence to Mankind, as to advance the Knowledge, and encourage the Practice of that good Religion. While this Life only was the Point in view, provided the great Ends of Society were answer'd, and the Peace and Prosperity of the Publick tolerably secur'd, it might be thought there was no great Occasion to be extremely solicitous about cultivating the Minds of the lower People; the Consequences of their Ignorance were seen, and, if never so bad, were of a short Duration. — Not so, when an happy or a miserable Eternity depends upon their present Behaviour: This is a Point of Consequence, that must alarm and stir the Thoughts of Men; and a sincere Christian, thoroughly and affectionately convinc'd of this, will find his Humanity strongly touch'd in the Reflection, and exert every Instance of his merciful Compassion in spreading such solid and useful Instructions around him, as will best inform the Minds, and most effectually mend the Lives of those, who may be lost to all Eternity for want of such good-natur'd and pious Instructions.

It is another Part therefore of the merciful Man's Character, to use the most prudent and compassionate Care he can to reclaim the Wicked. No Man, that has a Concern and Tenderness for the Welfare of another, especially if he be of near Relation, or indeed upon the Foot of common Humanity, but must be griev'd at the Conduct

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of a Man abandon'd to Wickedness. There is something so shameful in a wicked Life, so injurious to the Reputation and Interest of one's Friend, so mischievous to Society, to the Comfort and Happiness of a Man's own Life, and of such dreadful Consequence hereafter, that the Sight of it cannot choose but raise the Compassion of a merciful and good-natur'd Man, and consequently procure his Care and Assistance: — A prudent and well-govern'd Care, I mean; not any impertinent and unreasonable and pettish Reproofs, but just, and wise, and well-timed Instructions, such as will shew a Love and Charity to the Person, and an Hatred only of his Vices. — There is a Way most certainly of advising and oftentimes reclaiming a wicked Man, and Mercy and Prudence will find it out and apply it; for Wickedness is a State of Life much worse than Misfortune, and more properly the Object of our mutual Care and Assistance; and he that is recover'd from it, by the Kindness and Benevolence of another, will be very apt, (while the Experience of the Change is warm upon him) to express his Gratitude, and pray for the Reward of his Benefactor in the good Words of our Saviour here, *Blessed are the Merciful, &c.*

Again, Forgiveness of one another in the Case of Affronts and Injuries, is another Property of Mercy.

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This is very largely and expressly enjoin'd us by the Gospel, it is the Voice of Nature and Reason, it is necessary for the Peace and mutual Comfort of Society; and the Sense of its Obligation is so generally and well understood, that, in common Phrase, it is almost appropriated to furious and revengeful and implacable Men, that they are unmerciful; and indeed nothing is a stronger Instance of a savage and inhuman Nature, than to be malicious and revengeful, implacable to those who have offended us, inexorable to those who desire to be received to Favour, and cruel to those who are under us. "If ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your Trespases." This is expressly asserted by our Saviour, and the revengeful Man would do well to consider it maturely. — But if he will not forbear Revenge out of a *good* Principle, let him do it from a bad one; let his *Pride* restrain him, and let him consider, that nothing debases him so much as the fulfilling such an ugly Passion: Even this would be something; and in time perhaps he might come to see, That Compassion is the true Principle of Forgiveness; and that Men, who are themselves so subject to Mis-carriages and Infirmities, who so often stand in need of Forgiveness from one another, and All from God, can practice no Point of Duty, that will more become them, than Forgiveness of Injuries. And for the same Reason pretty much, Mercy

obliges us in many Instances to depart from what is our strict Right, to sacrifice a little to the Peace of Society, and the Welfare and Interest of our Neighbour. In the Bible we find it, and often in other moral Writers, that Justice and Mercy are mention'd together, intimating probably, that they ought to be practis'd in conjunction; for Mercy is a more lovely Vertue, and argues more Goodness than Justice does, the one being a strict Debt, and the other a Favour and Kindness. — The Strictness of Justice may, in some Instances, be great Unmercifulness, and there Mercy comes in as a Check upon this rigid Vertue, and governs and tempers its Severity; it may indeed be said of Mercy, in its general Influence, that it is the Mixture of that, which constitutes the Happiness of Human Life, by moderating Justice, by making Wisdom charitable and useful, and Power beneficent. — It is, in some Respects, in Men, as it is in God, our great Original; Justice, Wisdom, and Power may make us formidable, but Goodness and Mercy make us amiable. This therefore is another indisputable Point of Mercy, to depart from our Right in Compassion to the Wants of other People. Nay further, it is the Goodness and Generosity of Mercy to do more for the Good of others, than we are strictly oblig'd to do; for where true Goodness, and not our own Conveniency is the Motive of our Actions, the Accomplishment of the Good of others will be the only End of them;

them; and in the Distribution of Rewards, as well as in the Way of strict Sale and Bargain, I will not consider so much the Pains and Labour, as the Wants of a Fellow-Creature. — This is that merciful Justice, of which there are some fine Instances in the Law of Moses, and which is essential to the Character and Spirit of Christianity. To close the Character of Mercy, besides these great and important Instances of it, upon which the well-being of the World depends, and which are the necessary Terms of the Salvation of a Christian Man, it is further required of us, that we behave to one another, in the *lesser* Offices of Life, with a general Sweetness and Humanity of Temper.

There is a Sort of Mercy in Civility, in inoffensive Deportment, in mutual Forgiveness and Condescension, in charitable and good-natur'd Turns, in avoiding Scandal and Defamation, in keeping clear of morose and rude and broad Language, in settling little Misunderstandings, in right Information, in proper and decent Respects, and in pardoning and helping our mutual Infirmities. — These, I say, exerted in the lesser Offices of Life, are no inconsiderable Instances of Mercy, nor of small Moment in our civil Conduct and Conversation, nor at all below the Care and Observance of a Christian. Nor is this all; for there is indeed another Office of Mercy still behind, upon which I must beg leave to say a Word or two, because
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the thing seems of greater Moment than Men, at first Sight, are aware of, and that is Mercy — nay, I will call it Humanity, to the Brute Creation. [We stile ourselves Lords of the inferior World, and boast in the Dominion which God has given us: 'tis well; let us therefore behave ourselves like Kings, and not like Tyrants; let our Power be tempered with Mercy, more especially to those Creatures, which are the Slaves and Drudges of our Pleasures; and, with regard to Others, let us never destroy their Lives or put them to Pain out of Wantonness, but, when we kill them for our Use or Defence, let us shorten their Pains, and put them to no unnecessary Torture. The Scripture says, that a merciful Man is merciful to his Beast; from whence we may reasonably conclude, That this Sort of Mercy, as well as that to one another, will be plac'd to our future Account. Cruel Sports were thought a very high Reflection upon the Politeness of the *Roman* People, and I am sure they are much greater upon the Mercy and Humanity of Christians. But of this enough.

Having thus very largely shewn you what is the Quality of Mercy, and how it is, in some general Instances, exerted, I proceed to consider the second Part of the Text, by which the Duty is enforced and recommended, *Blessed, &c.*

Now, I think, in explaining the happy Effects of these great Christian Vertues, enumerated here
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by our Saviour, it is not only lawful but incumbent on us, to shew that they have the Promise of this Life, as well as that which is to come, and, exclusive of future Rewards, are really eligible for themselves. — They are undoubtedly best for us here, as is plainly the Case of the Vertue we are now speaking of, a kind and merciful Behaviour. *Blessed are, &c.* First, on account of the Affection itself, which is founded on Love and Humanity; a pleasant and friendly Passion, pure and peaceable, and full of good Fruits to Men; and tho' it may seem to create us Trouble by subjecting us to the Pain and Infirmities of others, yet the Satisfaction which arises from the Sense of doing them good, does more than make amends for the Uneasiness their Misfortunes give us. Upon which Account *Solomon* has said, with great Truth and Justice, that a “merciful Man doth good to his
“own Soul, but he that is cruel, troubleth his
“own Flesh.” — There is a Comfort and Satisfaction in the merciful Man's Reflections, which as the wise Man expresses it, doth good like a Medicine, whereas the After-thoughts of the Cruel and Oppressive give them a World of Torment and Vexation: Nay, the Exercise of Cruelty in any kind must occasion a great deal of present Uneasiness; and tho' Habits will go far in changing our Natures, it is hardly to be conceiv'd that a Man can either oppress or neglect to help a miserable Object, without putting a great Force upon
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his natural Temper. — Now Nature is a very stubborn Thing, and, tho' kept down for a while, is apt to recoil terribly upon the Man who warps it.

Secondly, Therefore the Merciful may very properly be pronounced Blessed in their Vertue, because it is acting agreeably to the Bent and Inclination of Nature, which has form'd us for Pity and Compassion. — In other Points of Duty, we are put upon thwarting and breaking our Inclinations, but here we are to follow them, and the Pleasure arises from the Sense of having done so. Neither is there any thing in the Practice of Mercy that mortifies or sets us low in the Opinion of the World: On the contrary, to Pity, to Relieve, to Comfort, to Instruct, to Reclaim, to Forgive, to behave with Generosity, sets us upon the superior Side, and is acting a very honourable Part in Life, as our Saviour himself might intimate in that memorable Saying of his, that “ it “ is more Blessed to Give than to Receive.” The hardest Part of the Duty, and that which is most stomach'd by Men, is the Forgiveness of Injuries; the Wisdom of which however is sufficiently justified by observing, that for one Man, who has repented the Forgiveness of Injuries, ten Thousand have regretted the Revenge of them. *Blessed* therefore are the Merciful; the Performance of their Duty is natural and easy, agreeable both to Reason, Religion and Inclination, and in the
Opinion

Opinion of all Observers, bespeaks a generous and noble Nature.

For it is, Thirdly, another happy Circumstance to the Merciful, that the Practice of this Duty procures him certainly a great deal of Esteem and Love. Every particular Man with whom he converses finds the Benefit of his Correspondence, and Society at large is better'd by him. There is a Loveliness in his Example, no-body has any thing to object against it, but every one praises it. — It is something to be just and preserve an inviolate Fidelity; but this is short of the merciful Man's Deportment. — He is more, he is kind and generous and beneficent, and not only as good as, but usually much better than his Word; so that commonly speaking, he meets with very fair Quarter from the World: Prosperity gives him great Command and Authority, and in Adversity all are ready to help him, who, in his Turn, has been helpful to all; and therefore Men of all Ranks and Conditions find their Account in the Practice of this Vertue, both in its Esteem and Usefulness; for Mercy, as *Job* beautifully has express'd it, is the Robe and Diadem to the Magistrate, is Nobleness in the Man of Quality, is Honour in the Soldier, and not only the Ornament, but the very Life and Subsistence of the Lower World. — *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.* They have made the best Provision for it, from the Hands of other Men, or, if they fail of it there,

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they have a sure Friend of God, whose Providence is engag'd in their Favour. For, Fourthly, This seems implied in our Saviour's Promise, that the merciful Man shall obtain Mercy; that is, the Providence of *God* will protect and defend him here, by guarding him against Misfortunes, easing his Pains and Infirmities, supporting his Spirits, and enabling him to bear the Burthen of Human Life with Comfort and Satisfaction. — It is reasonable to think, That the Providence of *God* will bear a particular Regard to him, who is so much the Image and Resemblance of himself; and the Royal *Psalmist*, I remember, intimates to us, That *God* proportions his Reward to the Nature, as well as the Degree of Men's Vertues. — Charity to the Sick shall be rewarded on the Bed of Sickness; “for he that considereth the Poor, the Lord “will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishings:” But let that be as it will, and as the Wisdom of *God* shall order it: This however we are sure of, That lastly, in the final Event of Things, and at the great and dreadful Judgment of the Last Day, the Merciful Man shall obtain Mercy, and this is of more moment to him than every other Consideration: There is indeed some Comfort and Satisfaction in the very Practice of Mercy, in the Love and Esteem of Men consequent upon it, and in the Hopes that we live in *God's* present Favour: But the solid and lasting Comfort is, that it will secure us an Interest, and bespeak

bespeak *God's* Favour to us in the Day of Judgment. Then it is that our Mercy will stand us in stead indeed, and then shall we bless ourselves in the Remembrance, when all our good and merciful Actions shall be put in the Balance against the wilful Transgressions, the habitual Vices and Neglects, and all the shameful Practices of a sinful Life. — How far they will weigh must be left to the God of Mercies, and the Goodness of our Blessed Saviour: As yet we cannot understand the full Meaning of that very significant Phrase of obtaining Mercy; it can only be known in that tremendous Day, when the Equity and Wisdom of *God's* Providence will be justified in the Sight of Men and Angels. In the mean time we must, and safely we may rely upon the Assurance of our Blessed Saviour, who has left it upon his Authority, to encourage us to the Practice of the most useful, most amiable and godlike Vertue, and of all others most agreeable to the Character and Spirit of his Religion; that the merciful Man shall be Blessed, because he will obtain Mercy.

Having thus explain'd the Duty of the Text, and enforc'd it by general Arguments, I come now to recommend it to your Practice from the particular good Effects produc'd by it in the Hospitals and Workhouses of this Great and Flourishing City; which I cannot do in any manner so lively and affecting as by referring you to the Particulars of the last Year's Account; from

whence you will learn much better than from the feeble Voice of the Preacher, or than from any general Description, what are the several Properties of Mercy ; and when you are convinc'd how much Good has been done by them in relieving the several Species of Human Want and Misery, as you cannot but highly approve Designs in themselves so excellent, so, I trust, you will encourage them, as *God* has bless'd you with Abilities, in making them still more useful to the Publick.

The R E P O R T.

YE have now heard by Relation, what Thousands feel in Experience, with what a wise and compassionate Care the Magistracy of this Noble City watches over the Welfare of it, and are truly sensible, I doubt not, what Thanks and Gratitude are due, next under *God*, to them. They fulfil, ye see, the Character both of the Civil and Religious Magistrate, &c. not confining their Attention to the great Branches of Government, without which Society cannot subsist at all; with a Piety truly Christian they consider the Wants and Distresses of the meanest Individual. It is not my Purpose to flatter, but to remind ye of a Truth, of which the World is Witness, that no Schemes of Publick Charity can be laid or executed with greater Judgment or Fidelity, than those

those which offer themselves annually here for your Approbation and Encouragement. It is a thing very possible that Charity itself may hurt Religion and Society, and the superstitious Foundations, happily now become part of this most useful and pious Revenue, are a Proof that even Charity may be defeated and spoiled by Popery; and the pure and beneficent Vertue, full of good Fruits to Men, the Honour and the Ornament of Christianity, be abus'd to Purposes quite opposite to its Nature; while that Spirit of Delusion reign'd here, the specious Name of this good Vertue was made use of often to cheat the World, and the pious and honest-hearted Christian gave away his Substance or left it at his Death, to be squander'd by ill-designing Men, in ostentatious Shew, in foolish and hurtful Superstition, or in the Support of ignorant and idle Religionists; and true Charity, for which the whole was intended, and by the Credit of whose Name it was obtain'd, had indeed the least Share of the Benefaction. — The Piety and resolute Honesty of our Ancestors rescued this excellent Vertue, and we now, *God* be thanked, see it exercis'd with a Wisdom truly religious and truly beneficial to Society. — There is now some Sense and Goodness in the Conduct of it, and the Preacher can with Heart and Courage recommend it, when every Branch of this charitable Revenue will stand the Test, and extort the Approbation of the severest Examiner.

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One *Hospital*, we are told, takes up and instructs many Hundreds of poor Orphans, and fits them for Business and Navigation, raises them from the Dust, and renders them, in time, the Pride, the Riches, and the Bulwark of their native Country. Others open their Gates to Thousands of Sick and Wounded, administer to them the Succours of the best Human Art, and by a regular and clean, and, so far as their Revenues will allow, plentiful Care of them in their Distresses, restores them to their Health and Limbs, and reinstates them in their several Callings. Discipline and due Correction are the Business of another, where the Severity of Justice is temper'd with a proper Mercy, and the lew'd Vagrant, deaf to the Voice of Reason and kind Instruction, is taught his Duty in a Way better suited to his disingenuous Nature, and oftentimes it happens, that the Terrors of Infamy, and the Severities of Discipline will bring Men to their sober Senses, when nothing else will do it: Thus much however is certain, that this proper and seasonable Correction sets a Mark upon Lewdness, and if it does not always restore the Wicked, the Example of it deters and may preserve the Innocent. The *Hospital* of *Bethlem* takes Care of the distracted; a Sort of Charity scarce to be equal'd for its Purity and Disinterestedness and extensive Benefit. — There is no seeing, indeed no thinking of, the miserable Creatures confin'd there, without melting into Tears at the
Sense

Sense of their Unhappiness, no reflecting upon the Means us'd for their Recovery, without rising up and blessing their Benefactors. — Oh, may their Numbers encrease daily, till this Noble Foundation is compleated by a proper and a lasting Provision for those, whose Distempers are too stubborn for Human Art and Application.

The *London-Workhouse* proves its prodigious Usefulness by its own History, and when one observes how many Thousands, in the Course of a few Years, have been cloath'd and educated, and sent into the Publick Service, and how many Thousands more restor'd to it, by the good Care and Discipline of the House, we must own that it bears a very honourable Share in the Charities of this munificent City: And indeed it must be confess'd of all these several Institutions, that no Publick Charities can be better design'd than they are; Religion and Civil Government unite in their Approbation; they plainly answer every End of both; the Good of Society, the Happiness of Individuals, the Advancement of our most holy Religion, and the Glory of our great Creator; so that if they are as faithfully executed as they are wisely design'd, we shall act with great Unthankfulness to the good Governors of them, shew little Warmth or Concern for the Publick, or the Success of our Religion, and betray a very criminal Obdurateness to the Wants and Miseries of our Fellow-Creatures; if we deny them our best Help
and

and Assistance. — Who then are they that answer for the right Administration of these excellent Charities? Their Presence forbids me to enlarge upon their Praises, but Justice commands me to observe, that as their Talents for and Acquaintance with Business, their opulent Fortunes, their natural Attachment and Love to their City and their Country, and to the Interest of their Religion, render them fit for so important a Trust, and set them above every little and private Corruption, so their Behaviour in it has always appeared to be most exact and exemplary; and one Circumstance should always be remember'd to their Honour, that far from declining these kind Offices, tho' attended usually with much Trouble and Expence, they seem ambitious of the Employment; as if it was a Praise and Credit to their Characters, as indeed it is, to go about doing Good. But still, it seems, the Supplies of Bounty, tho' manag'd with most scrupulous Fidelity, are very unequal to the Calls of Want, Misery, and Misfortune. — Now this is a great Reproach to us, not only as Professors of the best and best-temper'd Religion in the World, but to the Humanity and Good-nature of the *English* People. — Look round about you, observe the Marks of Opulence in this prodigious City, with what expensive Elegance we build, with what Vanity and Curiosity we furnish, with what Pride and Ostentation we are attended, with what a sumptuous Luxury we spread our
Tables,

Tables, and in what Excess and Prodigality we support our Publick Diversions, and then sit down and be asham'd to consider, that nothing around us bears the Mark of Penury but our Publick Charities: — A very faithful Report of their Condition is here presented to you, and such, as we will hope may move your compassionate Assistance: For in the midst of the highest and most luxurious Affluence, it ought not surely to be matter of annual Complaint, that Houses decay for want of Funds to repair them, that Orphans are left expos'd to Poverty and Vice, that the Sick and Wounded are rejected for want of Room to receive them, the Incurables return'd upon their distressed and helpless Friends, and even in those Hospitals, which are manag'd with the nicest and most faithful Oeconomy, the Accommodations short of what Charity and Good-nature could wish them. — How much better would it become the Grandeur of this Christian City, if the Cup overflow'd, if the Garners of Charity were full and plenteous with all manner of Store, so that there should be no Marks of Decay, and no room for complaining in our Streets. — One might mention a World of Arguments to warm your Compassion upon these Occasions. I will suggest one to you, which is not always consider'd, at least not so much as it seems to me to deserve. It is this, That there is not a clearer Point of natural Justice, nor any thing more for the Interest of Community,

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nity, than that these particular Charities should be supported and encouraged. — It should never be forgot, That People in higher Life owe all their Ease and Felicity to the Industry and Labours of the Poor: They bring in all the Materials of our worldly Happiness; they trade for us, they fight for us, they build, they furnish, they provide for our Tables, and attend our Commands both in Health and Sickness, at all Times and Seasons both of Business and of Pleasure, and this at the Hazard of their own Health and Lives; and therefore it is not a Point only of Mercy, but of natural Justice to take the kindest Care of them and of their Offspring, — a Care which will be amply repaid us: For when they experience our Bounty, I had like to have call'd it Gratitude, upon these Occasions, they will serve us with Heart and Love and Faithfulness, will seek the Peace of the City, where they dwell, and be naturally carried, in their several Stations, to promote the Common Interest. The Truth is, neither the Peace nor Welfare of the Publick can in any degree be preserv'd without a due Care of the Poor; and it wants but little Reflection to see, that the Rich, with all the Advantages that their Wealth could give them, would have a very uneasy Time of it, if the Children of the Poor were utterly untaught and ignorant, the Sick and Aged unprovided for, and the Idle and vagrant Part of them let loose upon the Sober and Industrious: It is not therefore,

fore, as I must observe again to you, only the Goodness of Religion which enjoins us Charity, but it is part of the Wisdom of Civil Government, and has been the Care of all understanding Legislatures. — An Argument which I will venture to leave with you, as a very important one for Mercy and Good-nature; which will strike your Minds with a Force not to be resisted, when, in your private and Self-Reflections, you will add to it, those still more weighty ones drawn from the Nature of *God*, from the plain Injunctions of those Scriptures, which you believe and reverence, and from the most amiable Example of that kind, and merciful Sayiour, who is to be our common Judge.

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